



November 15, 2015  
John 11  
Pastor Larry Adams

## I AM (The Resurrection and the Life)

Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for downloading the podcast of this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope these messages you are using, to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

If you have your Bibles, I'd like you to turn with me, if you would, to a great passage in John 11 – the raising of Lazarus, as we continue on in our series, *Who Do You Say I AM? Knowing the True Jesus*. I want to take a moment to welcome all the people who are live-streaming with us right now locally here, and around the world. Thank you for tuning in. I know some of you are sick, some we've been praying for this week, or recovering from surgery. May God's hand be upon you. And I also know that many of you are in communities where you've said that you don't have a church you can attend. So I'm glad you can be with us. For missionaries who are tuning in now, on the other side of the world, it's probably night for you, but I thank you for tuning in as well. I hope your time with us can be a blessing. If we can help you, I hope you'll write to us and let us know.

John chapter 11 is the story of Jesus raising His friend Lazarus from the dead. In so doing, He demonstrates why Christians do not need to fear death. There is a whole new approach to it. Not that death doesn't hurt – it does, but it can't hurt the person who died, if they are in Jesus. And a whole different view of what it means that He is the Great I AM, the Resurrection and the Life.

Jesus was ministering in the North country when He got word that His friend Lazarus was sick. Lazarus, with his sisters Mary and Martha, lived in the little village of Bethany, which was about two miles east of Jerusalem, just on the backside of the hill called the Mount of Olives. Jesus spent a lot of time there with His disciples. He ate with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. He and His disciples would spend the night at their home. He loved them, had a special relationship with them, and when Lazarus was sick, it was an opportunity for Jesus to show His glory to the world. This is the way John recorded what happened (John 11):

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

<sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, <sup>7</sup> and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

<sup>17</sup> On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

<sup>21</sup> "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

<sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

<sup>24</sup> Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

<sup>27</sup> "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

<sup>38</sup> Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. <sup>39</sup> "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

*Father, this miracle was not just for Lazarus and the sisters. It's for all of us. Death is a real enemy, but you have exposed it. Because of Your work on the cross, You have rendered it*

*virtually powerless. We need today to learn to not fear it, because we are now able to see it for what it is, and it can never touch us, for the believer in Jesus will never die. Help us, Lord, to understand what it means to have the Great I AM, who is the Resurrection and the Life. And we'll thank You, in Your precious name, Amen.*

John Beukema is a pastor at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania and he was telling about some friends who were hanging out one day. The conversation turned to the issue of death. Now, if you want to kill a conversation, just start talking about dying. One of the friends asked the other, "What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?"

One friend said, "I'd want people to say, 'He was a great humanitarian, and cared a lot about the community.'"

The second said, "I'd want people to say, 'He was a great husband and father, an example for many to follow.'"

The third guy thought a minute and said, "I'd hope someone would say, 'Look! He's moving!'"

Many people find it hard to face the inevitability of death. I realize sometimes people get so burdened by the things of life, they think death is more attractive and they actually take their lives. Most people are afraid of death and seek to avoid it as often and as long as possible.

The reason death is so scary is, it's such an intrusion. We were never designed by God to deal with death. It was never a part of the original equation. Do you remember, God created man to be eternal and live forever in unbroken relationship with Him and with each other. That, God said, would be life eternal – relationship with Him. But sin really messed that up. Adam and Eve were real people and they rebelled against God. They made the simple mistake of thinking they could do it better than God had said. So they went their own way. That rebellion was sin. Sin entered the world and spread to all humanity, separating us from God.

God is Life! You'll hear that a lot in this series. To be joined to God is the very definition of Life. To be separated from God is death. Many people don't know what life and death are. It has nothing to do with length. It has to do with relationship. You are either in relationship with God and you have life, or you are NOT in relationship with God, and you are in a state of death. All of us sin, so death comes to all of us. That's what Paul was talking about when he said to the Romans (5:12) "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned."

Death is a reality. It was never intended to be there. God knows we are not fully equipped to deal with it, so He gives us the truth, but Satan uses it to control and manipulate us, with the fear of death. That's why, when Jesus went to the cross, He paid for sin. He robbed death of its power.

Do you remember in 1 Corinthians 15:56-7: "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law."<sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The sting of death is sin. You see, the reason death can hurt anybody is, it has a stinger. The stinger of death is sin. If you die with sin still in your life, death will sting you. It will separate you from God forever in eternal death. But if you can die with no sin in your life, because it has been forgiven, because it has been cleansed and removed – then when you die, death has no stinger. It can't hurt you any more. The sting has been taken out.

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. Sin has power because of the law.

What gives a police officer the right to pull me over and tell me I'm going too fast, and give me a ticket? The law gives him that power. If there was no law about driving the speed limit, he would have no right to pull me over.

What gives sin the right to sting you with death? The law gives it that power. Because the soul that sins, it shall die. That's the law. But when Jesus died on the cross, He died there to meet the full demands of God's law. The wages of sin is death. He took that death. He died that death. He met that law. With the law-demands met, now sin has no authority to sting, so it has no death. (applause).

That's why there aren't many ways to God. There is only one. Only one, who is the Resurrection and the Life. This is why Jesus could proclaim Himself to be I AM, the Resurrection and the Life. And to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, who had just died and was in the grave, (John 11:25) Jesus said to her, "I AM the Resurrection and the Life. The one who believes in Me will live even though they die. And whoever lives by believing in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

In other words, do you, Mary and Martha, believe who I am? That as God in human flesh, I am the author of life. That I can give your brother life, even though now he is rotting in a grave? And do you believe who I am, that those who believe in Me will live, so that if their body dies, they never will? Do you believe this? Martha said, "Yes." And in one of the most powerful demonstrations of His identity, Jesus raised a dead and decaying man to life. Fully proving that the resurrection we hope for, the life that we are seeking, Jesus said, I AM. Death can no longer hurt the believer because Jesus, the I AM, is the Resurrection and the Life.

What does it mean for us that He is the Resurrection and the Life?

**He said, as the Resurrection, it means that in Him, we live even if we die. And as the Life, it means that those in Him will never die.**

Jesus is the Resurrection, so those who are in Him will live, even if they die. Jesus said (11:25) "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."

Lee Eckloff, a pastor from Vernon Hills, Illinois, was relating an article he read in the Associated Press, about Alfred and Jerry Esposito, of Mastic Beach, New York. They had been told that their son, Freddy had been killed in a collision with a tractor-trailer on a Pennsylvania highway. It was an understandable mistake on the authorities' part, because for some reason the man who died was carrying their son, Freddy's driver's license and his wallet. Freddy was supposed to be staying with his brother, Chris, so when Chris got word of his brother's death, he raced home. Jerry, the mother, relates what happened next. "Chris went downstairs into his brother's apartment. He saw something on the couch. Chris poked at the lump under the blankets, and his brother awoke. Chris screamed, 'You're dead! You're dead!' and Freddy said, 'I'm not dead, I'm sleeping!' Lee Eckloff went on to say, "That's the story of our lives as Christians. Thanks to the resurrection of Jesus, we don't die, we sleep. The Bible speaks only of Christians who sleep. Even in our sleep, we are alive in Christ, consciously awaiting the day Jesus returns to claim His bride, the church.

People, this sleep is not soul sleep. This sleep is not purgatory. This sleep is not some intermediate place of suspended awareness. When people physically die, they leave their body and they are consciously alive and aware of their surroundings. They are with the Lord, away from their physical body. Sleep is the way God describes the believer's death, because when you are asleep, you look like you are dead, you look like you are gone, but you are very much

there. If any of you have kids or grandkids, is there anybody that grieves when our kids finally go to sleep? Anybody? (laughter) I've heard rejoicing and celebrating. High-fives. I don't know anybody that grieves when their kids finally go to bed.

Why is that? Because you know they are going to awake. They're still really there, and you're going to see them in the morning. That's how Jesus described Lazarus' death to His disciples. Lazarus is sleeping. His body is in the tomb, it's decaying, but Lazarus isn't in there.

Jesus was about 20 miles north of Bethany when He got word that His friend Lazarus was sick. John tells us in John 11:4-7

<sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, <sup>7</sup> and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

Do you see verse 5? Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, so when He heard that Lazarus was sick, he strapped on His running shoes, wasting no time, and raced off to Bethany because He had to get there before Lazarus died, so his sisters would not grieve. Is that what it says? No! What does it say? "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days,"

So many times, we have things happening to us and we cry out to Jesus and we don't see Him doing anything. We think, *where in the world are You?* Don't ever make the mistake that He doesn't love you. He is up to something more. He waited two more days and then told them why. "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." This sickness will not end in death. Jesus never said Lazarus wouldn't die. He said this sickness will not *end* in death. That's because for the believer it never does. For the believer, no sickness can end in death. Because God is going to work even our physical death, to bring about a greater glory. And it's the resurrection He is going to show us, in time, that the loved one we lost, isn't dead after all. They are very much alive.

When the time was right, they headed back to Bethany. The disciples protested because things back near Jerusalem were dangerous. There was a price on Jesus' head. You see it in verse 8-10:

<sup>8</sup> "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. <sup>10</sup> It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

Jesus is telling them that all of this is orchestrated by God. We're doing this in the daylight! God's will is in this! We're not walking in the darkness, where we have to stumble or worry. Don't be afraid to go back to Jerusalem with Me. God is with us. We're walking in the light. This is His plan. We're going to go back to show you His glory. You don't have to be afraid.

John 11:11-16

<sup>11</sup> After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

<sup>12</sup> His disciples replied, “Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.” <sup>13</sup> Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

<sup>14</sup> So then he told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas (also known as Didymus [which means twin – he must’ve had a twin brother or sister]) said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

So Jesus approaches Bethany. Lazarus has been dead for four days. When Martha got word He was coming, she ran out to meet Him. John 11:21-15:

<sup>21</sup> “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. [Mary later said the exact same words. You know what the sisters were saying while they were in this waiting period. Jesus, where are You? Where is Jesus when you need Him? He’s always around to eat, he’s here to sleep. He says He loves us and now that we need Him, where is He? If He had only been here, Lazarus wouldn’t have died! – (Have you ever been there? Where are You? I’m crying out but I’m not seeing anything. If You had only been here!)] <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

<sup>24</sup> Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” [You can hear it, can’t you? Yeah, I believe in the future resurrection thing. But I was hoping maybe You could do something sooner.]

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.

In other words, Martha, your brother’s body is dead and decaying, that’s true. But your brother is very much alive. In fact, would you like to see him?

John 11:38-44

<sup>38</sup> Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. <sup>39</sup> “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.” [I love the King James version, which says, “He stinketh.” That really puts it right for you!]

<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

You see, Lazarus wasn't dead. His body was dead and in the tomb, but Lazarus was very much alive. So Jesus called to him, and when life calls, death obeys. It had to let Lazarus come.

Someday, when I'm in heaven (because of Jesus), I want to look up this guy, Lazarus. I want to say, "Lazarus, what was it like, man? You had left your body. Four days you'd been gone! You're in heaven, hanging out with all the gang that's up there. The great prophets of old. What was it like when one of the angels came and said, 'Lazarus! Jesus is calling!'"

"What?"

"Jesus is calling. He wants you to come back."

"Are you serious? I need to leave this to go back to that?! My sisters believe. They'll be joining me..."

"No, He's calling you back right now."

"Ok." (reluctantly)

In fact, "Lazarus, come out" – literally the phrase is, LAZARUS, THIS WAY OUT! This is the way! Come to me.

It was the great comfort that the apostle Paul taught that if you are absent from the body, you're present with the Lord. Your body is dead but you're not. We have confidence, Paul said, that when we are in this physical body, here, Christ is with us. He lives in us, but we don't see Him. I don't see Jesus with my physical eyes and neither do you. Someday, we're going to be out of this body, we're going to be with the Lord, and we'll see Him as He is, and we're going to be like Him, John said.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 <sup>6</sup> Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we live by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Jesus is the life. He is the resurrection. He lived, He died, He rose again. He ascended to the right hand of the Father in Heaven, and when a believer dies, they don't go in the ground. They don't go in the crematory fire. They don't get dumped at sea. Their body does, but they are not there. Absent from the body, at home with the Lord. So complete is Jesus' victory over death in His resurrection, that even our dead, decaying, cremated, buried-at-sea bodies are going to be raised back up again. I don't care where you scatter these ashes, God is going to bring them back. So complete is our salvation and the resurrection, that our perishable bodies are going to be raised imperishable. They're going to be made new. Our mortal bodies are going to be made immortal. No longer subject to disease, or illness, or aging, or death. They are going to be

eternal. We're going to be clothed with a brand-new, resurrection body, just like Jesus when He rose from the dead. He's going to gather out of the graves, gather out of the ashes, gather out of the seas, gather out wherever bodies have been eaten and destroyed, He is going to gather them up.

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 <sup>50</sup> I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. [We're not going to go to the perfection of Heaven in these old, mortal bodies. Thank God for that.]<sup>51</sup> Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep [not everybody is going to physically die, Jesus is going to come back and there are still going to be a few on earth, but if you die, your body is going to be raised up, and if you're alive when He comes, your body is going to be instantly changed, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye. A Greek scholar once told me that phrase describes the time it takes for a hummingbird's wing to flap one time – that's quick!], but we will all be changed— <sup>52</sup> in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

It's done! It's over! We're with Jesus! (applause)

And Jesus told Martha and Mary, "Your brother will rise again. He is not dead. Here! I'll show you!"

John 11:43-44 <sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." [He won't be needing those!]

When you have Me in your life, He told Martha, you have resurrection power. That resurrection power, I AM.

**Not only is He the resurrection, and we live even if we die, but Jesus is the LIFE. So those who are in Him will never die.**

John 11:26 "and whoever lives by believing in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

When I was a little guy, I used to be traumatized by the thought of death. I still remember laying on a bed, or on the couch, thinking *what will it be like to die, be put in a box, be buried under the ground and covered with dirt?* I used to think, *what if I wake up in there?* I was traumatized by this. It's ridiculous, but I used to think it. You know what? A lot of people do.

Many people are traumatized by the thought, and they take elaborate steps. I've read of people who put lights in their casket. I've read of people who put communication systems in, so they can communicate with the outside in case they wake up. I read of a lady who was buried with her Cadillac, so that she could communicate somehow through the electronics in there, to get

back to people and let them know she needed to be dug up so she could keep driving! This stuff is ridiculous!

There is nothing biblically wrong, that I can find, with cremation. I mean, your body is going to dust anyway. But some people choose it, not simply because it's cheaper or more convenient for others, but they don't want to deal with the whole burial thing. They'd rather just be ground to ash. They know they aren't going to come back from that.

Some people are desperate. They try cryogenics. Ever heard of that? More and more people are doing it. They pay tons of money to freeze their bodies and hope that in some future day, there will be a cure. They can get thawed out or microwaved or something, so they can get cured from whatever it was that killed them!

The problem is not that the world does all these crazy things. The problem is that Christians still think like this. We need to see it differently, but sometimes we don't. Simon Critchley is a philosopher who wrote a book in 2008, called *The Book of Dead Philosophers*. It is very insightful, actually, what he wrote in there. He writes about how often we don't know how to prepare for death. He is especially surprised that Christians, who have many reasons not to fear death, are still so afraid to die. He said,

In a national survey from 2003, 92% of Americans believe in God. 85% believe in heaven. 82% believe in miracles. But the deeper truth is that such religious belief, complete with the heavenly afterlife, brings believers little solace in the face of death. The only priesthood in which people really believe, is the medical profession. And the purpose of their sacramental drugs and technology is to support longevity, the sole, unquestioned good of contemporary Western life. If proof were needed, that many religious believers actually do not practice what they preach, then it can be found in the ignorance of religious teaching on death, particularly Christian teaching. Christianity in the hands of a Paul, or a Luther or an Augustine, is a way of becoming reconciled to the brevity of human life. But many Christians today are actually leading desperate, atheist lives. Bounded by a desire for longevity and a terror of death.

Jesus told us that life is not defined by length! It is defined by a relationship with Him. Now I get that this is the only life we've known, and we say, Critchley says, that we believe in God and we believe in heaven and we believe we'll go there when we die. We believe it's better, so he is asking the question, then why do Christians say they believe that and yet try so hard to hang on to this? He doesn't understand it!

Now, nobody wants to say good-bye to their loved ones and many of us are not anxious to leave, no matter what we say we believe. But sometimes, if we are not careful, what we are actually demonstrating is, longevity is more important to me than anything else. And I'd rather be here than be with Jesus. We have to be careful with that. Jesus said He is the life. Life is found in relationship with Him. If you believe in Him and have that life, because you believe in Him, you will never die. Do you believe this?

John 11:26 "and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha's answer was real. She was right. John 11:27 <sup>27</sup> "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

You believe Me, Martha? Then take away the stone.

But Lord!

Martha, do you believe this? Do you believe that I am the resurrection and the life? Do you believe that, though your brother's body is dead, he is really alive? And do you believe, that because he believed in Me, he is not really dead? Do you believe that?

Yes, Lord.

Then, move the stone.

I find myself in the same place. I believe all these things, and yet sometimes when it comes right down to it ...

Jesus said, ok, we're going to face this thing. Move the stone. Believe in Me. Face your death. Face your future. Don't worry. Trust Me.

But I think, but Lord! But Lord!

But Martha's faith overpowered her unbelief and she moved the stone. Jesus the great I AM showed her the power of life.

This is why people who believe in Jesus, who have Christ living in them by faith, who have been born again and are spiritually alive, Jesus said, will never die. Their bodies will die. Some day they'll stick my body in the ground, or in a crematory fire, or maybe they'll dump me out at the dump! I have no idea where they'll put me, but I won't be there. Our bodies can die but because Jesus lives in me, I can't ever die. Because He is the life.

I don't know how I'm going to die. Neither do you. Maybe I'll get cancer that will steal away my body, but I know this, cancer will never touch me. Maybe it will be a bullet or a knife (I'm not exactly the most popular guy in the world with the stuff I teach). Bullets or knives might pierce my flesh but I can assure you this – they will never be able to touch me. I'm getting older. I don't know about you, but my body is wearing out. I can feel it more and more every year. I work out and do what I can, I try to eat as well as I can and do all that stuff, but my body is wearing out. Age may someday overtake my body, but it will never overtake me. In fact, do you want to know the truth? I (the real me, inside this earth suit) am not getting older. I'm getting stronger. In fact, if I live long enough, my outer shell will be so decayed and decrepit, that the me inside will be so strong with Jesus, that this body is not going to be able to hold me. I'm going to be out of here! I'm going to be out of here! (applause). I'll be more alive than ever before, because I'll know the fullness of life without the baggage of this decaying bag! So why in the world am I trying so hard to hold onto this?

I don't have a death wish and neither do you. Death hurts and I admit it. We don't want to lose loved ones. Most of us, if we're honest, we aren't in a hurry to go through that experience. But we need, as Christians, to understand – if you believe in Jesus and He lives in you, that you have the life, where you can't, by definition, die. You'll never know what it's like. Your body will slip away by whatever means God chooses, but you'll be more alive than you've ever been.

Spiritual death, physical death, eternal death. Jesus has conquered them all.

John 3:16 <sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Nothing will ever be able to separate you from God again. Because you have life, Jesus said, if you have Me. And that life, I AM.

For years, Larry King was the king of television news and commentary on CNN and the host of Larry King live. Many of you may have watched him. He has interviewed some of the most famous people in the world. Two months ago in September, the NY Times published a piece on him, reporting that:

The television commentator, Larry King, is obsessed with death. His day begins with reading obituaries. He ponders, *who will give the eulogy at my funeral?* He smiles as he thinks, it may be Bill Clinton, then his face goes blank when he realizes, *I won't be there to see it.* He has had a heart attack, quintuple by-pass, prostate cancer, diabetes and seven divorces. He was 77 years old when the television station CNN dropped him. When this happened, he became acutely aware that he was nearing the end of his career, and eventually of his life; that one day, he would die. To move against aging and death, he takes hormone pills for human growth, four a day. He plans for his body to be frozen so that some day he will live again. It's nuts, concedes King, but at least it gives him a shred of hope. King said, "Other people have no hope."

People, where is your hope? Where is your hope? You see, apart from Jesus Christ, there is no real hope. There is only desperation. But those who are in Jesus, who have believed and trusted in Him, they don't need to be afraid, because Jesus IS our hope. He has revealed the truth about death. That He went to the cross and took it head-on and He ripped the stinger out of death when He met the full demands of the law, rendering it powerless. So it can claim our bodies, but it could never touch us. That's why Jesus said, "If you live and believe in Me, you're going to live even if you die." Your body may go in the ground, or wherever, but you never will. And if you live and believe in Me, you will never die. You can't, because I am the life. I live in you. Death isn't defined by how long you are on the planet, it's defined by whether or not you know Me and I know you. And you're never going to be separated from Me again, so by definition, you can't die. In fact, when your body is done, you'll be more alive than you ever have been. That's why the apostle Paul told the Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. [and that the Lord is going to come back with a great shout, the people who have died, their bodies are going to be raised up, and if you're on the earth, you're going to be translated in an instant into that glorious body and we're all going to come together and be with the Lord forever. ]<sup>15</sup> According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds

to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Jesus said in John 11:25 “I am the Resurrection and the Life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die. And whoever lives by believing in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

John 11:27 <sup>27</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

When Martha said that, she used the present tense. Do you know what that means? When she said, “Yes Lord I believe” she was saying to Jesus, “I believe and I will continue to always believe, because I know who You are.” That’s the key to overcoming the fear of death.

What about you and me? Do we believe? If you do, and you have Christ in you, and you are in Him, then you are going to live even if your body dies. And if you are alive in Him, you will never know the death experience because Christ, the life, is in you. You go from life to life, whatever happens to your body, because you have the one in you who is the resurrection. You have in you the one who is the life.

That resurrection and that life, Jesus said, I AM.

*Father, thank You. Death isn't easy. Never meant to be. It's still an intrusion. We still hate it and it still hurts. But it can never touch the believer. So we grieve but not like those who have no hope, because we believe Jesus died and rose again. We believe that He is the life. So Lord, as we deal with the inevitability of this thing called death, may we not be afraid. May we know the truth and the truth set us free, so that we can approach these things with a hope that the world knows nothing of. A hope that allows Your light to shine so that others can see that where Jesus is, there is always life and that You, as the resurrection and the life, will always be the great I AM. We thank you, in Your precious name, Amen.*